

December 22, 1950.

Dr. T. M. Sonneborn,
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Dear Tracy:

Thank you very much indeed for your generous suggestion of a collaboration on your textbook. I wish that I could join you in this project, but I don't think that I possibly could. However, except for the added work which would devolve upon you, I doubt that there will be later cause for regret. I would, myself, prefer a text written from a single particular viewpoint like your own to a joint effort such as you propose.

However, if you should decide later that I can be of any assistance in a smaller way, I'll be glad, for example, to read your chapters concerning bacteria. But I just won't have the time or energy for any more extensive writing jobs for some time to come - they leave me exhausted, and I don't have a research organization yet that can roll along without my constant attention.

Your suggestion on the organization of the text seems quite sound, except that I wouldn't relegate the general biology (life cycles) to an appendix, even nominally. I would rather present the methodology of genetic investigation for the various organisms in the first section, and then take up various individual topics in a second. The two sections would take up about 1/3 and 2/3 respectively.

My own pedagogic efforts have a slightly different objective from your own, namely to make a "genetic" outlook available to our microbiology students. This objective is rather limited, perhaps, but it is deplorable how fuzzily hereditary phenomena in bacteriology are taught and practiced even today. In about ten years, I expect that there will be enough material to warrant a text on genetic bacteriology, but until then I hope to be able to avoid the temptation of writing.

I am sorry that you won't be able to visit Madison soon, but the welcome mat is out, and I hope you will use it as soon as your convenience permits.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg